

EXHIBIT 16

Accusations

While both the TST-UK and TST-Los Angeles cited frustration with the NC, the reasons for their departures were quite different. The controversy was stoked further when *Jezebel* writer Anna Merlan began interviewing TST members for a story on a Satanic “civil war.” Merlan reached out to Jex Blackmore, who had left TST in February. Blackmore had been an incredibly charismatic spokeswoman for TST’s reproductive rights campaign, especially with readers of *Jezebel*. Several young women I interviewed cited Blackmore as the reason they became interested in TST (Blackmore’s work as a performance artist is discussed further in chapter 6). However, Blackmore had stepped down as head of the Detroit chapter and had little engagement with TST leadership. During this time the NC was established and approval for actions became mandatory. On February 10, Blackmore performed a “Subversive Autonomous Ritual” in Detroit. The *Detroit Metro Times* described it as a “Satanic Temple” performance and documentarians for the film *Hail Satan?* about TST were invited to film it.²⁴ However, the NC was not informed about it. In keeping with Blackmore’s Satanic philosophy, the performance deployed violent imagery such as hog’s heads impaled on spikes in order to shock the audience into resisting the forces of theocracy and patriarchy. At one point, Blackmore stated, “We are going to disrupt, distort, destroy. . . . We are going to storm press conferences, kidnap an executive, release snakes in the governor’s mansion, execute the president.”²⁵ In an interview, Blackmore explained that she was not calling for literal violence and that “the president” referred to an office of authority, not a person.²⁶ In a 2019 interview with Merlan, she suggested that the performance was also meant to mirror and call into question the violent rhetoric seen at Trump rallies and other “acceptable” political events.²⁷ But the NC saw statements like these as a serious liability that could serve as a pretext for bringing the entire organization under federal investigation. Some NC members suggested releasing a public condemnation of the performance. Instead, Blackmore was asked to quietly resign. This suited Blackmore and she agreed.

For six months Blackmore said little about her break with TST. But when Merlan approached her for comment, this seems to have prompted her to tell her side of the story. A day ahead of Merlan’s story, Blackmore published an article on the website *Medium* where she wrote:

My departure [from TST] was mutually agreed upon, but it was also business as usual—a small group of individuals with no accountability to the organization they represent asserting a paternalistic need to put a woman in her place, gain control, and undermine her autonomous power.

Blackmore wrote that she had tried and failed to combat “a culture of racism and sexism,” stating, “I misrepresented TST as a group that genuinely cares about the rights and liberties of marginalized groups. They do not.”²⁸ She reported experiencing harassment and abuse while in TST, implied there is corruption in TST’s fundraising, and echoed a claim made by TST-Los Angeles that the Twitter lawsuit was about Greaves’s ego rather than a response to calls for arson.

Blackmore also raised a new talking point. Her article linked to a discussion of a podcast recorded on September 11, 2002, in which Lucien Greaves—then known as Doug Mesner—made offensive and seemingly anti-Semitic remarks. Satanist Shane Bugbee had the idea to create a marathon twenty-four-hour live podcast hosted through Radio Satan to promote the new edition of *Might Is Right*. As the illustrator, Mesner was invited to appear on the podcast. The tone of the podcast is sophomoric and intentionally offensive in keeping with Bugbee’s philosophy of Satanism. In the exchange in question, Mesner states, “It’s OK to hate Jews” if this hatred is based in contempt for their supernatural beliefs but that “it’s not OK to hate Jews” if this hatred is based in racism or ideas of eugenics. Bugbee then asks Mesner, “Do you like Satanic Jews?” Mesner answers, “Satanic Jews are fine.” Bugbee replies, “One drop of Jew blood means you ain’t breaking bread with me, motherfucker.” At this, someone on the podcast can be heard laughing. Mesner starts to respond, at which point Bugbee accuses Mesner of being Jewish himself. In what may have been an attempt to disarm the situation, Mesner then replies, “Look at me, I’m an Aryan king.” This is met with more laughter. This exchange is followed by a more serious discussion by Bugbee’s wife, Amy, about how Jews exaggerated the numbers killed in the Holocaust and have exploited it for political gain, during which Mesner is silent.²⁹

It is a disturbing and confusing exchange, and this is partly the point. Intentionally offensive polemics like this are par for the course within the milieu of Satanism. Petersen locates Bugbee specifically, along with Adam Parfrey, within “a genealogy of aesthetic terrorism.” He notes that all Satanists “play” with society’s associations of Satan with evil, transgression, and violence,

writing, “It can be very difficult to discern when it is serious and when it is irony, play, stupidity, or plain provocation, especially when moving to the fringes of the margins, so to speak, among one-man groups and nebulous networks.”³⁰ In an interview, Greaves said of the entire podcast, “It was dumb.” When I asked about this exchange, he pointed out that he was arguing *against* racist forms of anti-Semitism. He added, “At that time I was much more outraged and vindictive against organized religion. Ironically, I have a greater appreciation of religion now because of having this Satanic community.”³¹ Jarry and Guinan are both Jewish and rejected the suggestion that Mesner harbors anti-Semitic views. Jarry expressed irritation that those claiming Greaves is an anti-Semite never bothered to ask his opinion about the podcast.³²

The 2002 podcast was all but forgotten until it was discovered by members of the Stop Mind Control And Ritual Abuse Today (SMART), who were angered by Mesner’s reporting on their conferences. They apparently listened to all twenty-four hours of the podcast, searching for instances of Mesner making offensive statements, which they transcribed and posted in on-line forums. Many TST members had known about the podcast for years. But when high-profile figures such as Blackmore left TST citing a culture of racism, these comments suddenly took on new significance. Blackmore wrote of the podcast, “Shamefully, I ignored past expressions of racism and sexism.”³³ For some, the decision to work with Randazza, Greaves’s friendship with Adam Parfrey, and comments from a sixteen-year-old podcast seemed sufficient to conclude TST was actually a racist organization despite being openly progressive. It should be remembered that these concerns were being raised days before the one-year anniversary of the “Unite the Right” rally in which hundreds of white supremacists, some armed with assault-style rifles, marched through Charlottesville, Virginia, leading to violence and the murder of one counter-protestor.

Blackmore’s article was followed by several other *Medium* articles from former members, including chapter heads and even a former NC member, stating their reasons for leaving TST. By August 13, one such author described her article as a “YAQTSTP” for “Yet Another Quitting TST Post.”³⁴ TST-Portland left to become Satanic Portland, announcing this in the middle of the night before TST’s rally in Arkansas. Most of the members of TST-NYC left as well, leaving the chapter temporarily moribund.

The *Medium* articles marked the beginning of a long series of accusations and counter-accusations between those who remained in TST and those

who left. Several former members compared TST to a “cult,” intending all the negative associations this term carries. An anonymous blog was created largely dedicated to proving TST leadership actively supports fascism.³⁵ Some of the accusations raised in interviews, by both sides, included online harassment and bullying, legal harassment, and ultimatums that could be interpreted as blackmail. There were also allegations of TST mismanaging donations and former chapter heads either losing track of or refusing to turn over proceeds from fundraisers. Such accusations are fairly common in the study of emerging religious movements. The interviewees seemed earnest and legitimately upset, but it is beyond the purview of this book to evaluate these allegations.

Significantly, interviewees on both sides expressed that social media aggravated these problems. Zeke Apollyon commented that Facebook “lends itself to contention and performative cruelty” and that “a lot of our communication has become trash.”³⁶ It was clear that the situation took a toll on everyone involved. Some interviewees who had left TST described feeling “traumatized” by the experience and were now seeking therapy or experimenting with anti-anxiety medications. Greaves also reported feeling symptoms of depression and agoraphobia, noting that he was used to attacks from religious conservatives but not from left-leaning Satanists.³⁷ There were, however, many cases of individuals who remained supportive of one another despite being on opposite sides of the schism.

Arkansas

In the midst of this turmoil, TST proceeded with its rally in Arkansas. In short order, TST crowd-funded the \$20,000 needed for transporting the Baphomet statue to Little Rock and hiring a private security detail. It was able to muster a sizable showing of members in Little Rock from Austin, San Marcos, San Antonio, Houston, Oklahoma, Santa Cruz, Michigan, and elsewhere. As the date of the rally approached, white supremacist leader Billy Roper called for “all white Christians” to join him in a counter-protest. Roper said of TST, “This particular group of Satanists are Anarcho-Communists, and celebrate homosexuality and race mixing.”³⁸ Thomas Robb, David Duke’s successor as leader of the Knights of the KKK, pledged his support. To prepare for the rally the capitol police force was reinforced by state police and the Little Rock police department.